



Howard County Government News Release

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Howard County Celebrates Successes for Children

ELLICOTT CITY, MD – Howard County Executive Allan H. Kittleman and the Department of Community Resources and Services honored individuals and programs that have made a difference in the lives of children at the 18th annual “Celebrating Successes for Children” ceremony held last night. Coordinated by the Department’s Office of Children and Families, the ceremony recognized the contributions and dedication of more than 70 honorees, including child care providers, local businesses, teachers, volunteers, students and coaches. Category winners included:

Infants and Toddlers: Stephanie Wickstrom, Howard County Public School System’s Infants and Toddlers Program

Stephanie is a passionate educator who genuinely cares about her clients, while promoting inclusion and supporting diversity. She teaches both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to help children express themselves better, and works with parents to help them communicate more effectively. This vital support enables parents who are feeling helpless and overwhelmed to become more confident and empowered.

Preschool: Gerry Feild

Before her retirement, Gerry spent more than 40 years positively impacting the lives of Howard County children. She helped create the County’s Directors’ Association to give child care professionals a forum to develop new trainings, discuss ways to improve their relationships with the school system and strategies for working with parents. Gerry stands out as a person whose motivation stems from seeking out what is best for children. Compassionate and caring, Gerry is a role model for the promotion of inclusion, diversity and community involvement.

Elementary: Evelyn Chaverini, Hispanic Achievement Liaison, Deep Run Elementary School

Evelyn is passionate about making school accessible for all families and goes above and beyond the expectations and requirements of her job to create a welcoming environment that fosters the critical home-school partnership. She advocates and proactively seeks resources

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for students and families through the library, county government and school system, breaking down barriers for them when needed. As a result of her efforts, Evelyn has been able to significantly increase Hispanic families' participation in school-wide volunteering, program attendance and PTA membership.

Middle School: David Messick, Wilde Lake Middle School

David's excitement for learning is contagious, as demonstrated by his ability to get his middle school students excited in a school subject, not an easy feat. He actively encourages his students to be musicians, offering them the opportunity to grow and shine as individuals and musicians. Just last year, he arranged for the school's jazz band to perform at the 2016 Columbia Jazz Festival, providing students a chance to perform at Merriweather Post Pavilion, a nationally recognized venue. He also reaches out to parents to make sure that their children are making the most out of the opportunities afforded to them. As described by his nominator, David has that "special something" quality that is not always quantifiable.

Mixed Age Group: Jill Maddox, Grace Community Church

Jill does a wonderful job supporting families by helping them build parenting skills and offering assistance to those who need extra help during a challenging time. She learns their needs and connects them with resources and serves as a constant source of hope. As an example, Jill organized a place for young moms to meet and brought in speakers to address their concerns; there are now more than 70 women who meet on regular basis. Jill also helps children with disabilities engage in ways that are comfortable to them, which provides a multi-hour respite for their parents. Many of these parents have not been able to attend a church service in years; Jill provides the structure and volunteers to make it possible for them to do so.

Youth Making a Difference (Tie): Zena Abro, Glenelg Country School and Yasmine Allen, Reservoir High School

As an active member of Glenelg Country School's (GCS) Service Club, Zena supports a variety of projects, benefitting the Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center and HopeWorks of Howard County. She also serves as captain of GCS's Rebuilding Together team (the only student-sponsored home in Howard County in 2017), where she is responsible for supervising volunteers, working closely with the homeowner, gathering construction materials and raising the funds to secure the \$2,700 sponsorship fee.

An advocate for social justice, Yasmine strongly believes that she can make a difference in her community. As a seventh grader, she joined the Youth and College Division of the NAACP and took part in various events, such as the Trayvon Martin Vigil for Justice. Now a student at Reservoir High School, she is the NAACP Youth Council's current president, vice-president of the Black African Leadership Union and a Delta Scholar. Yasmine is a positive role model for the community's next leaders, teaching them what it means to stand up for what is right.

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Family Friendly Business: Danyette Young, Fit4Mom Howard County

Danyette educates mothers and their children about the importance of making time for oneself and feeling good about yourself and your body. Fit4Mom Howard County serves a cross section of the community, where women of all ages, from diverse ethnic, economic and racial backgrounds come together to learn how to help their children become healthy, fit and happy individuals. Danyette provides a safe and nurturing environment where she changes lives for the better every day with her positive and healthy outlook on life.

O'Donnell Family Award: Lisa Davis, Howard County Public School System

The O'Donnell Family Award is presented annually to an individual or group in recognition of extraordinary commitment to providing caring, outstanding and effective direct care to the children and youth in Howard County. This year's award recipient is Lisa Davis of the Howard County Public School System. Lisa brings together the many voices in the early childhood community, and encourages communication to support the success of all students entering Kindergarten. Her positivity and commitment are infectious, and she fosters positive change in the community. Lisa goes above and beyond to assist all families, providing information in diverse locations and multiple languages, reaching out to minority coordinators and inviting underrepresented populations to join in discussions and planning. She makes sure that all voices are heard.

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